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GEOGRAPHIC SUPPORT PROJECT

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ANALYSIS OF REPORTS BY HUNGARIAN REFUGEE

ON POSSIBLE LOCATION OF SOVIET ROCKET BASE



CIA/RR GP 60-126:L

16 December 1960

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

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ANALYSIS OF REPORTS BY HUNGARIAN REFUGEE

ON POSSIBLE LOCATION OF SOVIET ROCKET BASE

Reports of Soviet missile activity in Zakarpatskaya Oblast¹ near the USSR-Czechoslovakia border have prompted a detailed analysis of information provided by a Hungarian refugee, Source [REDACTED]. He claimed to have seen in 1956 a Soviet rocket-launching site in the vicinity of a village, "Kotačka," that was located north of Uzhgorod, USSR. The Source was originally interviewed in 1958. He was reinterrogated in 1959 and 1960 to obtain more information on the exact location of Kotačka because this village could not be found in any of the standard reference materials. Significant locational data included in the three reports cited have been analyzed in an effort to pinpoint the location of Kotačka.

1. Place Name Search

In par. 11 of Report [REDACTED] Source says he saw a sign that read "Kotačka," but in par. 3 of [REDACTED] he speaks only of the way the name sounded to him.^{**} A systematic search of the most comprehensive geographical reference materials fails to provide any clue to the location of Kotačka. World War II topographic maps at the scale of 1:100,000, are available for the entire area north of Uzhgorod and, although not of recent date they are still judged to be fairly reliable for village names. No name closely resembling the phonetic spelling of Kotačka appears on them. Nor is any similar name included in the

* See Reports [REDACTED]

** The Russian spelling of Kotačka would be Кота́чка, which would be transliterated as "Kotachka."

comprehensive gazetteers, postwar political-administrative handbooks, or railroad timetables that cover the area. The names closest to Kotačka or Kotachka or Kótaczka are "Skotarsko" and "Potashnya." Skotarsko (48°44'N-23°16'E) is situated along the railroad northeast of Mukachevo, and Potashnya (48°44'N-22°27'E) is a small village along the railroad about 10 miles northeast of Uzhgorod.*

2. Distance/Time Analysis

As far as distance is concerned, Source easily could have traveled by rail from Cegléd, Hungary, to a point north of Uzhgorod, USSR -- a distance of approximately 200 miles -- in 2 days and 3 nights [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] A number of weaknesses, however, appear in Source's account of his roundabout return trip to Debrecen, Hungary. According to par. 13 of Report [REDACTED] the shepherd in Kotačka told Source that the freight train he had been on had crossed the Tisza River at Chop and advised him to return via the same southward route, but Source does not mention the Tisza on his return trip although the river forms a wide physical barrier along this part of the USSR-Hungary frontier.

After walking approximately 12 days and riding on a truck some 30 hours, Source must have crossed not only a border area of the USSR but also most of Hungary from northeast to southwest, and presumably he had gone through or very close to Uzhgorod and Budapest. Yet he does not refer to any city nor does he recognize any of the countryside even though some of it, presumably, was fairly near his home. His truck ride ended at Balatonfenyves (46°43'N-17°29'E), approximately 55 miles from

* See Map A for location of these villages.

** See Map B for probable route.

the Austrian border. Source must have had some idea of the location of Balatonfenyves, whether through former knowledge or local signboards, and he also must have realized that he was much closer to Austria than Debrecen. However, instead of carrying out his original plan to go to Austria, he jumped a freight train going in the opposite direction to Székesfehérvár, where he borrowed money and took a passenger train back to Debrecen -- a total distance of approximately 130 miles from Balatonfenyves. Since up to this point, Source apparently had remarkable success in evading authorities and crossing international borders, it seems strange that he did not try to get across the Austrian border at this time instead of returning to Debrecen.

If Source veered to the southwest while walking southward from Kotačka, he might not have seen the Tisza River, but he would have had to cross both the USSR-Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovakia-Hungary borders to continue his journey. If, instead, he veered to the southeast, he would have seen the Tisza as well as other rivers, and this direction would have led him into Rumania -- where he would have been far off course for a route that eventually took him to Balatonfenyves. If, however, Source had unwittingly but actually spent the brief period between his journey northward and his return trip in Czechoslovakia instead of the USSR, he probably would not have crossed the Tisza River. He also would have been farther from Debrecen and therefore might not have seen any familiar landmarks. In all probability, however, he would have crossed the Danube River and would have passed through or near Budapest.

3. Orientation and Terrain

25X1A2g According to par. 13 of [REDACTED] the peasant told Source that Kotačka was beyond the fourth mountain southeast of Poland; Kotačka was also described as being north of Chop (USSR) and Hungary, and northwest of Rumania. In contrast, in par. 3 of [REDACTED] Source indicates that Kotačka was located several mountains ridges southwest of Poland, but still northwest of Rumania.

25X1A2g Movement in almost any direction in the extremely mountainous area north of Uzhgorod and south of Poland would require crossing many ridges and spurs. Since there is no way of determining whether the peasant's concept of "mountain" included major ridges only or minor spurs as well, Source could have been almost anywhere in western Zakarpatskaya Oblast¹, if his story is evaluated on the basis of terrain and orientation alone. Considering distance and railroad information in addition to terrain, however, the most probable area is the mountainous expanse that borders the railroad between Kostrina (48°57'N-22°36'E) and Syanki (49°01'N-22°54'E).² Although not so likely, it is possible that Source was farther south in Area 2,** between Kostrina and Dubrinich (48°48'N-22°30'E). Old Russian and Czechoslovakian maps of these areas even show a number of railroad spur lines that would fit the description of the steeply graded spurs mentioned by the Source. Most of these lines appear to be old narrow-gauge logging spurs. Information is not available on the current status of any of these spurs, but they do serve to indicate potential areas where broader-gauge lines for missile use could be constructed most readily.

¹ See Area 1 on Map A.

² See Area 2 on Map A.

A comment about the Source's willingness or even eagerness to assume that he was in the USSR seems to be in order. When he emerged from the tank car the night he arrived in Kotačka, he could well have seen mountainous terrain very similar to the terrain he expected to see in Austria -- a country with many mountains and V-shaped valleys. He had been traveling 3 nights and 2 days in a dark tank car, convinced that he was headed for Austria, and therefore it seems incredible that Source would immediately recognize in the dark a heavily forested mountainous area that he had not seen since he was a child and would know immediately that he was north of Uzhgorod, USSR, instead of in Austria, where he expected to be (par. 6 of [REDACTED]). Such immediate perception and identification of mountainous terrain in the dark does not tally with Source's lack of recognition in the daylight of, presumably, more familiar Hungarian landmarks on his return cross-country trip, which lasted 12 days.

25X1A2g 4. Railroads

An analysis of the railroad transportation pattern in western Zakarpatskaya Oblast⁵ provides one of the strongest refutations of Source's claim of having been in the USSR. Practically all Soviet railroads are broad gauge, and Hungarian railroads are standard gauge. Therefore, traveling in a Hungarian standard-gauge tank car from Cegléd, Hungary, across the Soviet border at Chop and continuing northward in the same car to a point near the Polish border would be impossible unless some adjustment were made at the Hungary-USSR border. Removing the standard-gauge trucks of a tank car and replacing them with broad-gauge trucks is an operation that would be most unlikely to escape notice by the occupant of such a car. Although Source mentions "numerous stops and much shuttling"

he describes nothing that would indicate a change of gauge. Furthermore, the changing of broad-gauge for standard-gauge rail trucks is a procedure that appears to be reserved for passenger cars. There are no known instances of changing the trucks of freight cars at the Chop rail yard. Freight is customarily transloaded from standard-gauge to broad-gauge trains. In this area the usual practice is to bring empty Hungarian tank cars to the southern terminus of the Soviet broad-gauge line at Komoró, Hungary (10 miles south of Chop), where facilities are available for piping petroleum into the cars. Available intelligence indicates that the only line in Zakarpatskaya Oblast' over which European standard-gauge cars could be moved is the line from Chop to Mukachevo, a city east and south of any area that fits the descriptions provided by the Source. This line is dual gauge, having standard-gauge and broad-gauge tracks running parallel to each other.

As far as orientation is concerned, one could be north of Uzhgorod, USSR, but be in Czechoslovakia instead of the Soviet Union. It is possible, therefore, that the Source moved by rail from Hungary northward into Czechoslovakia. Two standard-gauge railroads run from Hungary into eastern Czechoslovakia, one going through Hidasnémeti, Košice, and Prešov and the other through Sátoraljaujhely, Michalovce, and Humenné.

Two further comments about Source's description of his railroad journey into the USSR seem necessary. It is curious that an empty railroad tank car would be transported from Hungary to the USSR to be left briefly at a siding of a small village in Zakarpatskaya Oblast' and then moved on, presumably to a nearby military installation. Military installations are generally consumers rather than producers of petroleum products,

and the usual arrangement would be to ship full tank cars to such installations. Furthermore, if Source spent two nights and a day in 2 inches of oil at the bottom of a tank car (before he got the blankets) the condition of his clothing must surely have been worthy of some comment even in a rural society. He seems to have been welcomed without comment, however, and not questioned by his shepherd host. It is also strange that a box car of Hungarian army uniforms and blankets would be shipped from Hungary to a military installation garrisoned by Soviet troops (par. 4 of [REDACTED])

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5. Border Security and Unidentified Markers

The USSR area north of Uzhgorod, which Source claimed to have traversed by rail and later on foot, frequently has been reported as a heavily fortified zone, with mechanized divisions and several chains of bunkers and underground installations. It seems strange, therefore, that Source does not recall having seen any such installations while walking out of the area and also strange that the international train going into the area was not inspected. If Source moved northward into Czechoslovakia instead of the USSR, however, the sighting of military installations would have been less likely.

Source describes markers (measuring 6 by 6 by 6 inches, set 150 to 200 meters apart, and numbered in units of five) running in an irregular line up the slope that he climbed to observe the missile site. In trying to use this information to identify the site, three possibilities were explored: (1) the markers might have some topographic survey significance, (2) the markers might represent the demarcation of a boundary of some type, and (3) the markers might delimit forest plots.

The first possibility was eliminated on the grounds that the markers did not seem to relate to any known topographic survey practice. Furthermore, it is believed that the markers could not possibly represent the present international boundary because markers along such boundaries are usually numbered consecutively, e.g. 140, 141, 142, and also because Source reports none of the usual security measures such as fences and plowed strips currently associated with this boundary area. He might have seen markers of an older boundary, either international or internal; there are many in this area. For example, the pre-World War II boundary between Czechoslovakia and Poland runs in a northwest-southeast direction through the area between Syanki and Uzhok. The detailed surveys of the demarcation commissions, which would locate and describe such boundary markers and their numbering, are not available.

In this part of the world, forested areas are commonly divided by plot markers for purposes of public use; but neither the Source's description nor available reference materials are adequate for locating any such areas.

6. Cultural Geography

None of Source's comments about food, clothing, type of house, use of kerosene lamps, women crocheting, or the stealing of coal help to pinpoint any one place or area within Zakarpatskaya Oblast'. These characteristics and customs are applicable to many of the mountainous areas of Eastern Europe. The fact that water from a well tasted like diluted or sour wine seems to be an insignificant phenomenon that, from available information, cannot be traced to any particular region.

In par. 18-20 of [REDACTED] Source says that he came to a tobacco-growing area after walking southward from Kotačka for 3 days. Some 3,000 hectares of land in Zakarpatskaya Oblast' are planted in tobacco. The principal tobacco-growing areas are located in the lowland and foothill areas of Uzhgorodskiy, Mukachevskiy, Beregovskiy, and Vinogradovskiy rayons. In recent years, however, tobacco cultivation has been extended into the eastern lowland areas adjacent to the border settlements of Khust and Tyachev. Walking southward from the Kostrina-Syanki area for 3 days probably would bring one into or near the tobacco-growing areas of western Zakarpatskaya Oblast'. Although this factor strengthens the likelihood that if Kotačka is in the USSR it is situated somewhere near Area 1, it does not necessarily rule out the possibility of Kotačka being located in Czechoslovakia because a similar pattern of tobacco distribution prevails in the southern border areas of Eastern Czechoslovakia. 25X1A2g

In par. 11 of [REDACTED] Source mentions Hungarian soldiers who come to Kotačka annually to ski. Skiing is possible throughout the mountainous area of Zakarpatskaya Oblast'. Ski clubs reportedly exist in Uzhgorod, Mukachevo, Mezhor'ye, Rakhov and presumably maintain bases in these towns.* Although no details are available, it is probable that the Uzhgorod and Mukachevo clubs use ski slopes in the mountains directly to the north. Around the "Sinyak" health resort, which is located near Svalyava, are good ski slopes. In central Zakarpatskaya Oblast' the chief skiing areas are near the settlement of Kolochava. Actually, skiing

* With the exception of Rakhov, which is located farther east, these towns are shown on Map A.

is most important in the extreme southeastern part of Zakarpatskaya Oblast' where Yasiniya,* the largest ski resort in the area, has excellent slopes around Gora (Mt.) Goverla and the Lazeshchiny River Valley. Thus, Hungarian soldiers may well have skied in the area north of Uzhgorod, but this information does not help pinpoint the location of Kotačka.

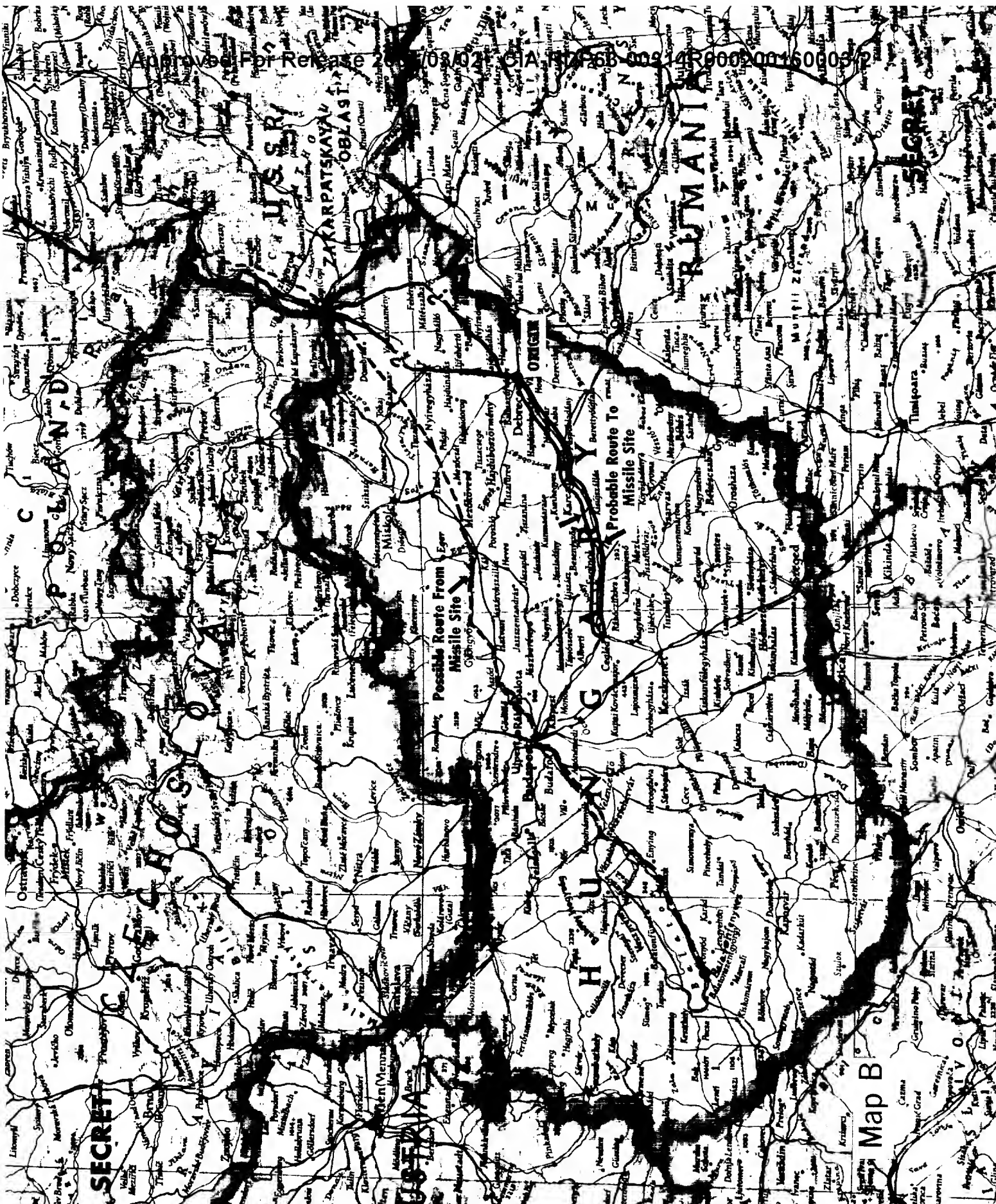
The fact that all the people the Source talked to -- shepherd, tobacco-farm woman, and two truck drivers -- spoke Hungarian does not help to locate Kotačka because both Czechoslovakian and Soviet territory now lying north of the Hungarian border were at one time under Hungarian control, and many Hungarian speakers live in these areas.

Summary

Although reference materials are relatively good on that part of Zakarpatskaya Oblast' north of Uzhgorod, systematic research on the area revealed no settlement with the name of Kotačka. Many aspects of the information included in Source's reports seem to point to the location of Kotačka in northwestern Zakarpatskaya Oblast', between Dubrinich and Syanki. However, the reports include a number of inconsistencies that are difficult to reconcile -- notably the matter of getting a European-gauge rail car onto a Soviet-gauge line and the highly unconvincing description of the trip back to Debrecen. Possibly Source went to some area north of Hungary and near the USSR border but not actually within the USSR and convinced himself that he was in Soviet territory. In many respects Source's account would conform better,

* Located east of the area shown on Map A.

though by no means well, to a description of a trip in and out of Czechoslovakia. Finally, his accounts of his inadvertant penetration into the USSR differ radically from one report to another, which makes them difficult to analyze and may indicate that they were fabricated.



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Map B

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